

April 15, 2021

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington DC 20528-0525

RECEIVED

By ESEC External at 9:59 am, May 04, 2021

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

I am writing to you on behalf of the over 2,000 members and followers of Neighbors For Refugees (NFR). NFR is a grassroots organization located in Mamaroneck, New York. Our mission is to advocate for the rights of refugees everywhere and work directly with refugee families to provide them with the necessary services, resources, and community support to bolster their resilience, achieve self-sufficiency and thrive in their new homes.

Over the last four years, we have helped hundreds of refugees to adjust to a life in the U.S. and to become self-sufficient. Among those families are a number of SIV families from Afghanistan. While their specific stories, including how they helped our forces over there, are all different, they all had several things in common: they were proud to have helped the U.S., they all ended up living in fear of retaliation for that work and they were happy to be here, where their families could be safe and have a future.

There are many more SIV families in Iraq and Afghanistan who share the pride of helping us and living in fear because of that work. I can only imagine how much their fears have only grown due to the President's decision to pull all our troops out by September 11th. I will not comment on the wisdom of that decision or its timing other than to say that it would be wrong if we pull out without keeping our promise to bring these individuals and their families to the United States. How can others count on the U.S. if we abandon them?

As president of NFR, and I know I can speak for other organizations like mine, we stand ready to welcome and support them.

Regardless of one's view of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, we must keep our promise to those who put their lives on the line for us!

Sincerely,



Frank D. Pierson
President



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

May 21, 2021

Frank D. Pierson
President
Neighbors for Refugees
P.O. Box 416
Larchmont, NY 10538

Dear Mr. Pierson:

Thank you for your April 15, 2021 letter regarding the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) programs for Iraqi and Afghan allies. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recognizes the vital contributions of Iraqi and Afghan nationals to the U.S. Government as well as the importance of the SIV programs, which provide humanitarian protection to certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals.

Pursuant to the Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration, issued on February 4, 2021, DHS, along with the Department of State (DOS) and Department of Defense, is reviewing the SIV programs to identify any potential concerns regarding these programs and will provide recommendations to address any identified concerns. This comprehensive review will help to ensure the programs are administered without unnecessary delay.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a partner of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, remains dedicated to the program's mission, which involves interviewing refugee applicant populations worldwide, including Iraqi and Afghan nationals. We continue to develop new ways to process refugee cases in light of challenges presented by COVID-19.

USCIS continues to work with DOS's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and Bureau of Consular Affairs on SIV and refugee related issues and stands ready to assist with SIV and refugee processing.

Thank you again for your letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Renaud".

Tracy Renaud
Acting Director